

MINUTES
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MONDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2006
REGULAR SESSION
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM, TOWN HALL
7:00 PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Board was called to order in open session at 7:00 PM in the Selectmen's Meeting Room at Town Hall. All members were present. Town Administrator Tom Younger and Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti were also present.

II. QUESTIONS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS

There were no questions.

III. ACTION BY APPOINTMENT

Reserve Policy Discussion

Town Accountant Barbara Hagg and Town Treasurer Floyd Carman appeared before the Board.

Ms. Hagg said the Town's current reserves stand at \$12.6 million or 17% of the Town's total revenues. That figure includes an unreserved fund balance of \$6.5 million as well as \$3.2 million from the Kendall School settlement and other encumbered reserves. The unreserved fund balance has increased by \$3.5 million since last year because the Town earned that much more in revenue than it ended up spending in FY06. The Town's reserve policy mandates that the total reserves be at least 10% of total revenues with the goal of maintaining Belmont's AAA bond rating. It was agreed that there is no particular fiscal merit to maintaining a reserve position that is significantly higher than 10%.

There was discussion of a proposal that had been raised in discussion among the Warrant Committee for spending some \$5.3 million from the unreserved fund balance including \$2.5 million for road and building maintenance, leaving the total reserves at 10%. Mr. Carman reminded the Board that the Town has a multi-million dollar unfunded post-employment health care liability that will also need to be addressed.

There was discussion about spending money on capital or one-time items, or on operating expenses. Mr. Carman said if you spend one-time revenues on operating expenses you create a problem in future years. Ms. Hagg said the operating budgets will be hurting this year and really could use some assistance. The Board noted that not all of free cash is one-time money, as it has not been unusual to apply a certain amount of free cash each year to the operating budget.

Mr. Younger reported that Belmont is 3rd in the state among towns for the amount of free cash certified this year.

The Board agreed to discuss this issue further as part of the budget process.

Town Administrator's Report

Mr. Younger reported on the following items:

" A "No Place For Hate" sign will be placed on Concord Avenue at the Cambridge border. Temporary signage in the median is now not allowed closer to the center than Cottage Street, so

it has accumulated right near that point. The Town's new policy will restrict each median strip segment to a maximum of 2 signs.

" Belmont Crew Club - The state has told the Town that they will not allow additional use of the river for the Crew Club to launch their boats. Selectman Brownsberger will pursue this on the state level.

" Belmont snowplow crews finished 1st and 2nd in safety knowledge, and 2nd place in two other categories at a statewide competition. The Board conveyed its congratulations to the employees who participated.

" Habitat - The current goal is to close on the property by the end of the year.

Harvard Lawn Fire Station

Andy Rojas, Chair of the Harvard Lawn Fire Station Committee, appeared before the Board. He said 4 proposals for redevelopment of the property were received, two for single family homes, one for a two-family and one for a potential 3 unit conversion. The bids ranged from \$200K to \$400K. The Committee has selected the Urbanica proposal (\$400K) as the most suitable, with the most experience. However, the Committee felt that the bids were not high enough and would like to consider re-bidding the project. The high bid works out to \$200K per unit for a two unit development, which seems low for Belmont.

Mr. Younger noted that the most recent appraised value of the property is \$350,000. Selectman Firenze pointed out that the assessed value is about \$800,000, which was also the value when the same appraiser appraised the property 4 years ago. He said he feels the Town should go out to bid again. The cost of doing so is the lost income and the lost tax revenue during the interim. The Town paid \$800K for a two-family house on a similar size lot on Concord Avenue.

Selectman Brownsberger said this is not a two-family house, it's a fire station, and it's not on Concord Avenue. He said the Harvard Lawn was the lowest assessed of the three former fire stations, and the Waverley station sold for \$600K. Mr. Younger noted the Town received more proposals for Harvard Lawn than for the other fire stations.

Mr. Rojas said the Committee voted unanimously to choose Urbanica but also unanimously to re-bid the project.

Selectman Brownsberger said he would like to see the proposals and hear the thoughts of the individual committee members. Mr. Younger will make the appraisal report available to the Board members. The Committee will make the proposals available to the Board and the Board agreed to have the Committee come before the Board to discuss this at the next meeting.

Kaspar Torosian, a longtime resident and local business owner, explained that he bid on the project to renovate it as a home with handicapped accessible features to accommodate his wife's disability.

Parking Issues

The Board received a report from the parking group recommending changes to parking regulations in the Waverley area. The purpose of the changes is to relieve a long-standing parking problem on Sycamore Street which is taken up by commuter and business employee parking on evenings and weekends as well as weekdays.

The parking group recommended the following changes be instituted for a 6 month trial period:

" Sycamore Street between Lexington Street and Davis Street will be signed "No Parking 8 AM - 10 AM" to discourage commuter parking.

" The current 2-hour parking restriction on the north, odd-numbered side of Thayer Road (gas station side) will be removed from Davis St. to Brown St. and will be signed "No Parking Before 8:30 AM" to provide an additional parking option for business employees and discourage commuter parking.

" Spaces currently designated as 2-hour parking will be re-signed as "No Parking Before 8:30 AM" on the following sections of Trapelo Road: On the north (westbound) side, between Waverley and Hawthorne Streets, and on the south (eastbound) side, between White Street and Maple Street. Spaces currently designated as 1 hour parking and spaces with no current restrictions will remain unchanged. This will create additional parking for business employees and discourage commuter parking.

At the end of the trial period, the regulations would be reviewed to determine whether they should be modified, discontinued, or become permanent.

The parking group reported that a public hearing was held to discuss these changes.

The Board moved: To approve the recommendations.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

IV. ACTION BY WRITING

A. Award of FY2007 Water Main Replacement Project

The Board moved: To award the contract to the lowest responsible bidder.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

V. ACTION BY CONSENT

A. Approval of Board of Selectmen's Meeting Minutes (10/30/06, 11/13/06, and Special Joint Session 11/1/06), Executive Session Minutes (10/30/06)

The Board moved: To approve the minutes.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

VI. OTHER

There was brief discussion of scheduling for upcoming meetings.

There was brief discussion of the status of the lease of the VFW building and the possibility of allowing use of part of the building by the Belmont Media Center.

There was discussion of safety conditions on Trapelo Road and Grove Street and whether to request some additional traffic enforcement in those areas.

A meeting has been scheduled with the Belmont Country Club to clarify specifics relative to the Woodfall Road agreement such as the height of the fence and shrubs that are to be installed.

The Board moved: To approve expenditure for a holiday luncheon for Town employees.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

The Board adjourned at 9:09 PM.

Administrator

Thomas G. Younger, Town